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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CANBERRA 000093

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DEPARTMENT FOR OES/OA BALTON, PHELPS, OES/ENRC LEE, OES/OMC  
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SUBJECT: CORRECTED COPY -- GARRETT COOL TO WHALING DEAL,  
SEEKS MORE ON CORAL, RESEARCH

REF: PHELPS-ATKINSON EMAIL 2/5

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich, Reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

CORRECTED COPY -- CORRECTED SIGNATURE LINE

11. (C/NF) Summary: Environment, Heritage and Arts Minister Peter Garrett raised enhanced coordination with the U.S. in the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI), Antarctic conservation and logistics, and the current whaling negotiations with Ambassador Bleich on February 4. Garrett believes that Australia will not be able to accept the current agreement being considered on whaling, and feels the U.S. and Australia, as the two most important donors in the CTI, need to increase coordination of efforts to ensure successful outcomes under the CTI. Garrett highlighted the opening of an air route to Antarctica from Australia and expressed interest in a visit that may include S or a congressional delegation. He also expressed interest in additional discussion of emerging initiatives from the U.S. under the International Year of Biodiversity. End Summary.

WHALING DEAL IS NO DEAL  
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12. (C/NF) Garrett told Ambassador Bleich he appreciated the "robust" exchange between the U.S. and Australia on whaling and felt he could speak frankly. In Garrett's view, the current agreement being negotiated in the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and its associated small groups would, in the end, be unacceptable to the Australian government as it fell short in several areas. Garrett said the negotiating process had largely ground to a halt, with no "real" proposals on the table. He said legislation pending in the Australian parliament (introduced by the Green Party on February 4 to examine the role of "spy flights" in Japan's planning for this year's whaling season) would strengthen anti-whaling sentiment in Australia, making it difficult for the government to accept the current proposals. Garrett said the February 22 IWC Small Working Group briefings, which will alert the NGO and global community to the state of discussions, will be key for Australia's policy on the negotiations.

13. (C/NF) In separate discussions on February 5, GOA officials confirmed significant concerns with the whaling negotiations but stopped short of Garrett's complete rejection. PM Rudd's Foreign Policy Advisor Scott Dewar confirmed that there had not yet been any cabinet decision on whether to continue to work for a deal in the IWC. At the same time, he told Pol-Econ Counselor that the current

notional deal (on which there is no agreement in the IWC) is impossible to accept in the current political environment. DFAT's Paula Watt said that entreaties to Garrett and his DEWHA staff that the deal is a necessary step to reforming the IWC have "bounced off" Garrett and other negotiators. Watt said that the most likely chance for a cabinet meeting is on February 15, and that strong messages before that date may be needed to shore up support for a deal. Watt further indicated that the current assessment is that Japanese FM Okada's visit will be too close to the February 22 NGO briefings to present any opportunity to get further with the GOJ.

¶4. (C/NF) Garrett Chief of Staff David Williams told econoff that the GOA could accept a compromise that delivers a much Qthat the GOA could accept a compromise that delivers a much lower level of whaling, but it has to be accompanied by signals of commitment to address other key issues - sustaining the commercial moratorium, keeping whaling out of the southern sanctuary areas and Australian antarctic waters, bringing all whaling under the control of the IWC, and preventing future scientific whaling. Absent any signals on these areas, Garrett and other political leaders will be under consistent attack on a deal that only addresses numbers, however low. Williams was careful to say that Australia would not act precipitously and would signal its intentions clearly. Pol-Econ Counselor and Econoff both echoed Commissioner Medina's message (ref email) on the importance of staying at the table to Dewar, Williams and Watt.

#### CORAL TRIANGLE INITIATIVE

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¶5. (SBU) Garrett said that as the two major donors in the Coral Triangle Initiative, the U.S. and Australia should work more closely on coordinating efforts to ensure effective outcomes. He noted that Indonesian President Yudhoyono had been a driving force behind the CTI, and was hosting the CTI secretariat in Indonesia. Garrett said the challenge for the U.S. and Australia is to ensure participating countries understand that outcomes need to be regional, not national. He pointed to the secretariat's use of national action plans instead of a regional plan as a concern, and said he sought further discussions with NOAA Administrator Lubchenco on the CTI. Garrett felt a strong signal could be sent on these issues during the President's planned visit to Indonesia in March.

#### ANTARCTICA

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¶6. (SBU) On Antarctica, Garrett felt the success of the 2009 International Polar Year events highlighted the importance of the region in environmental and climate terms. Garrett pointed to the availability of air transport from Australia in only four hours (compared to eight hours for U.S. aircraft based in New Zealand) as a strong incentive to travel there, and suggested senior USG officials interested in traveling in Antarctica could use Australia as a base vice the existing infrastructure in New Zealand. The Ambassador noted his personal interest in Antarctic exploration and the interest of senior officials, including the Secretary and Speaker of the House in traveling to the polar region. Garrett thanked the U.S. for participating in the Southern Ocean Research Program and hoped to hear more from the U.S. on its participation this year, including possible funding for projects under the partnership.

¶7. (C/NF) Comment: Garrett seemed eager to establish a good relationship with the Ambassador but was less relaxed in this meeting than we have seen him in the past. While he was consistent with his positions on whaling, CTI and other conservation issues, he appeared less willing to push hard on

those issues than in previous discussions both here and in Washington. End Comment.

BLEICH